

Psalms of Wonder Uses for Church and Home

A psalm is a song that we sing to God.

Psalms have music within them, filled with rhyme and rhythm. Can you feel it? They are a way people living long ago, and people still today, express many different feelings to God. The psalms are often used in communal worship, but also may be used for group or personal study and devotion or at home with a family group composed of different ages. The ideas in this guide provide a number of ways you can use *Psalms of Wonder* both at home and in multiple church settings.

The at-home section of this guide is intentionally designed as a single page (p. 2) so that you can email or print this page to share with families reading *Psalms of Wonder* at home. Visit www.pcusastore.com/PsalmsOfWonder to download the at-home activities as a single-page file.

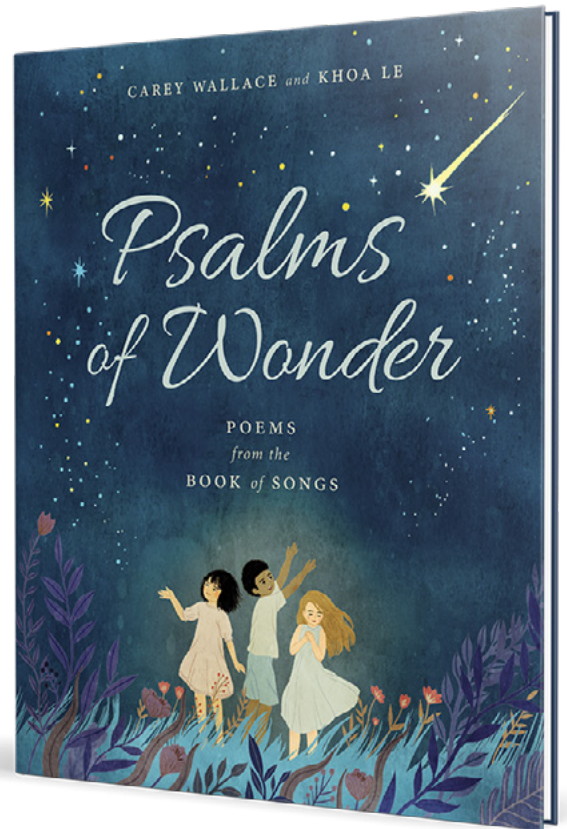
The remaining pages contain ideas not only for preaching and worship, but also for group study for multiple age ranges and devotional practices for adults.

We've also provided art for use in the settings described in this guide. For any other use, please contact rights@flyawaybooks.com.

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Using *Psalms of Wonder* at Home



Read the Psalm Aloud

The psalms communicate emotion and story, not information. When you read a psalm, take your time, allowing pauses at the end of lines and at each punctuation mark. Let your heart really hear what the writer is saying and think about how you connect with those emotions. Read aloud together with one voice or take turns, alternating sentences.

Wonder Together

After reading through the psalm, choose one or more of the questions below to discuss together.

- How does this psalm make you feel?
- When have you wanted to sing or pray these words?
- What word or phrase stands out for you today? Why?

Continue contemplating the psalm by looking at the art surrounding the words and talking about one or more of the following questions.

- How can you imagine yourself in this picture?
- How does the art make you feel? ([Download a .zip file of select art from the book.](#))
- If you were going to illustrate this psalm, what would you put in the picture?

Engage with the Psalm

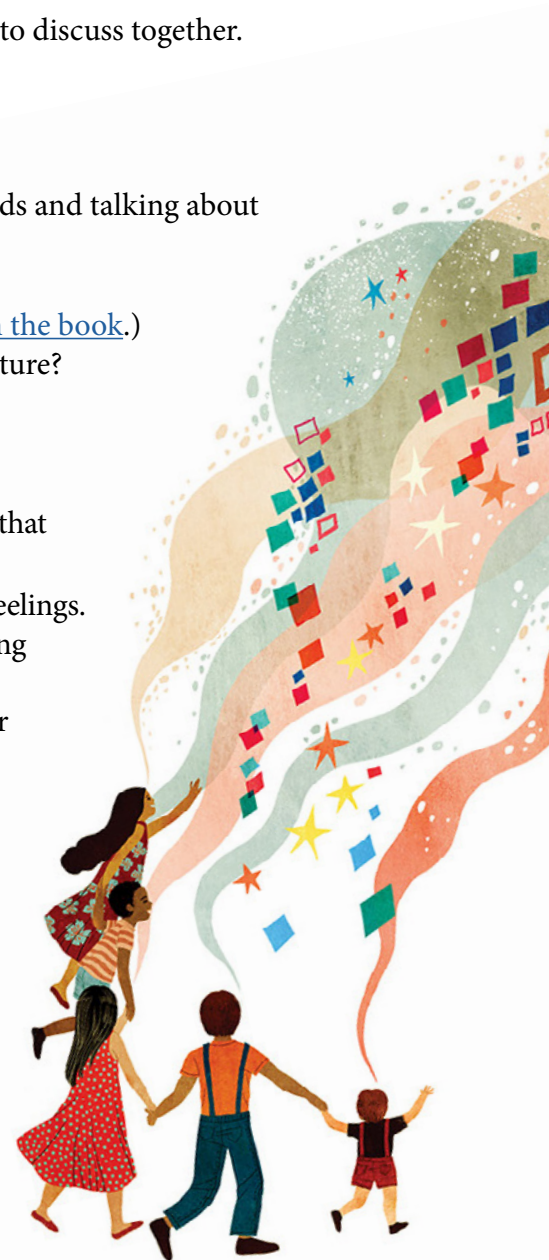
Choose a word or phrase from the psalm that interests you today. Engage with that phrase through one of the following activities as a family or alone.

- Use art supplies and draw, color, paint, or sculpt words, a scene, or your feelings.
- Move your body—dance, create motions, or go for a walk while repeating your phrase from the psalm.
- Create a rhythm or melody. Sing a song, play an instrument, or use your body to make music.
- Sit quietly and meditate using your chosen word or phrase.
- Do an internet image or video search for the psalm number and “art” or “song” and discover the ways people have expressed this psalm.
- Write your own poem, prayer, or song to God.

Pray for the Gift of Psalms

Give thanks to God for this psalm. Use the following prayer, or one of your own choosing.

Thank you, God for this psalm. Thank you for the feelings expressed by the psalmist that are our feelings too. Thank you for hearing our feelings of joy or pain, praise or anger, confidence or fear. We are grateful that we can bring our whole selves to you and you love us just the way we are. Amen.



Using *Psalms of Wonder* in Youth & Adult Bible Study



Invite each person in the group to choose a psalm and lead the study for that session.

Have the leader use the following process with the group:

- Begin by sharing why you chose that particular psalm.
- Read the psalm aloud. This may be done by an individual, in unison, or alternating sentences. Remember that the psalms communicate emotion and story, not information. When you read a psalm, take your time, allowing pauses at the end of lines and at each punctuation mark. Let your heart really hear what the writer is saying and think about how you connect with those emotions.
- Engage the participants in conversation using the following questions:
 - In the book *Psalms of Wonder*, this psalm is called a “Psalm of [name of theme].” Why do you think it is in this category?
 - Consider the words of the psalm and the illustrations on the page. Where do you see yourself in this psalm? Why?
 - What excites you in this psalm?
 - What challenges you in this psalm?
 - How do the visual images fit, or not, with the way you hear the psalm? ([Download a .zip file of select art from the book.](#))
 - What do you wonder about or want to know more about?
 - What will this psalm move you to think, feel, do, or be?
- Close with a time of prayer. Either ask for prayer requests that have arisen from the study of this psalm, invite people to pray silently sharing with God what is in their hearts, or pray a prayer of your own choosing. Close the time of prayer by thanking God for the psalm and for loving everyone just as they are, all the time!

Additional Activity Options:

- Do an internet video search for music by entering the Psalm number and “song” or “songs with lyrics” (e.g., Psalm 19 song with lyrics). Sing, listen to, and/or explore a song or hymn related to the particular psalm.
- Invite participants to choose a sentence or two of the psalm and make it their own by memorizing it. To help memorizing the section of the psalm, suggest that they:
 - illustrate it
 - write it down, emphasizing key words in different colors or sizes
 - create movement to go with the lines of the psalm
 - walk with it, saying a word at each step
 - use it as a breath prayer, inhaling on one part of the sentence and exhaling on the next part



Using *Psalms of Wonder* in Bible Study with Children



Have the leader choose a psalm to explore for each session. Then use the following process with the group:

- Read the psalm aloud. This may be done by the leader, an individual, or alternating sentences with volunteers. Remember that the psalms communicate emotion and story, not information. When you read a psalm, take your time, allowing pauses at the end of lines and at each punctuation mark. Let your heart really hear what the writer is saying and think about how you connect with those emotions.
- Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:
 - In the book *Psalms of Wonder*, this psalm is called a “Psalm of [name of theme].” Why do you think it is in this category?
 - What words or phrases paint a picture for you or do you see in your imagination?
 - What excites you in this psalm?
 - What challenges you in this psalm?
 - What do you see in the picture that is with this psalm? Why do you think the artist used this picture or these colors to illustrate this psalm? What might you do differently? ([Download a .zip file of select art from the book.](#))
 - Where do you feel this psalm in your body? Move or pose your body to show how it makes you feel.
 - What do you wonder about or want to know more about?
- Close with prayer. Invite the children to talk with God in prayer as a response to the psalm. Suggest that they think about the feelings they heard in the psalm and what they might want to tell God about their own feelings. Close the time of prayer by thanking God for the psalm and for loving everyone just as they are, all the time!

Additional Activity Options:

- Music: Do an internet video search for music by entering the Psalm number and “song,” “songs with lyrics,” or “songs for children with lyrics” (e.g., Psalm 19 song with lyrics). Sing, listen to, and/or explore a song or hymn related to the particular psalm.
- Art: Invite the children to paint, color, or sculpt an image or picture that comes to mind as they hear or think about this psalm. For group activity, provide construction paper and have the children rip the paper and glue it to a large piece of paper to create a group mural.
- Movement: Invite the children to create movement or motions that goes with the lines of the psalm. It may be expressive of the words or the feelings evoked.
- Memorization: Invite the children to choose a sentence or two of the psalm and make it their own by memorizing it. To help memorizing the section of the psalm, suggest that they:
 - illustrate it
 - write it down, emphasizing key words in different colors or sizes
 - create movement to go with the lines of the psalm
 - walk with it, saying a word at each step
 - use it as a breath prayer, inhaling on one part of the sentence and exhaling on the next part

Using *Psalms of Wonder* as a Devotional



Using elements of *lectio divina* (reading with God) and *visio divina* (seeing with God), choose a psalm as a personal or group devotional. Use the following steps:

- Slowly read the psalm aloud, even if it is just for personal devotion. Hearing the rhythm and rhyme, the sentence structure, and the lyricism of the words can be enlightening. The ears may hear something the eyes rush over.
- Ponder the following questions:
 - What word or phrase stood out for you?
 - What in the illustration caught your attention? ([Download a .zip file of select art from the book.](#))
 - How do the words and image speak to one another for you? Were they in concert or disjointed? What feelings did they evoke in you?
 - What do you think God might be saying to you at this time?
- Pray the words that stood out for you. Walk with them, breathe them in and out, or sit silently with them.
- Give thanks to God for this psalm, for your engagement with it, and for loving you always, at all times.

In the coming days or week:

- Listen for the words you chose from the psalm in the world around you.
- Look for the images from your chosen psalm in the world around you through color, shape, pattern, or repetition.
- Reflect on what you hear and see. Write about or draw your thoughts and/or discuss them with another person.

Lent Devotional

A personal or group devotional may be used at any time, but the season of Lent is ideal for personal reflection. Traditionally Lent is counted as 40 days, not counting Sundays.

In *Psalms of Wonder*, there are 39 pages with psalms, sometimes splitting a longer psalm into two pages. Begin your Lenten devotional period by reading the Introduction on day one, then focusing on one page at a time. When a psalm is split into two pages, you may choose to read each page separately, or read the full psalm two days in a row. On Sundays, take time to use one or more of the reflection activities above for the psalm that most struck you that week.



Using *Psalms of Wonder* for Worship Planning

Create Elements of Liturgy

Adapt the psalms from the book to use in parts of worship such as a Call to Worship, Prayer of Confession, Prayer for Illumination, Prayer of Dedication, and so forth. For example:

Call to Worship

Shout joy to God, all the earth!
Sing glory to God's name!
Tell God, "Your works are wonderful."
Your works are wonderful!
"Your enemies tremble at your strength.
And the whole world bows down, too."
Let us sing out God's name!
Come see what God has done—
wonders beyond all mortal power.
God turned the sea into dry land,
so we could walk through the water.
And we rejoice in you,
our God, who rules forever.
Let us worship God together.

—Psalm 66
(adapted from pp. 12-13
of *Psalms of Wonder*)

Prayer for Illumination

God, your teaching is perfect:
it brings our souls back to life.
And we can trust your word
to make the simple wise.
Your ways are fair
and make our hearts delight.
Show us what to do
and fill our eyes with light.
Amen.

—Psalm 19
(adapted from pp. 10-11
of *Psalms of Wonder*)



Tips for Reading a Psalm Aloud

Read as a solo voice or have two or more people read, alternating sentences. Use voices of different ages, if possible. Remember that the psalms communicate emotion and story, not information. When you read a psalm, take your time, allowing pauses at the end of lines and at each punctuation mark. Let your heart really hear what the writer is saying and think about how you connect with those emotions.

Share Art and Music

The psalms are filled with musical qualities and art-inspiring words, and you can use this to your advantage in worship with the following ideas.

- Use the Scripture index in the *Glory to God* (or another) hymnal to find corresponding hymns and songs so that the psalm is the focal point for that week.
- Do an internet video search for music by entering the Psalm number and "song" or "songs with lyrics" (e.g., Psalm 19 song with lyrics).
- Create art for bulletin covers, projections, or banners. Invite people to reflect on these during a reading, song, sermon, or reflection to create a *visio divina* moment (seeing with God). If providing it as part of a take-home piece such as a bulletin, encourage people to spend some devotional time with the art. Below are some suggestions for pulling art pieces together.
 - Ask leaders and members of the congregation and community to create artwork inspired by the illustrations or words in *Psalms of Wonder*. For a series, make a mural or set of banners that adds a section for each psalm in the series.
 - Use available illustrations from *Psalms of Wonder*, making sure to use the appropriate copyright notice. [Download a .zip file of select art from the book.](#)
 - Take photos and/or save pictures from an internet image search that are inspired by a psalm and create a slide show.



Using *Psalms of Wonder* for Sermon Preparation



Create a Sermon Series

- Create a series for a season of the liturgical year using the themes used in *Psalms of Wonder*, such as a four-part Advent series on Comfort, Courage, Joy, and Love; a six-part Lent series using one psalm from each theme or all six from “Songs of Courage”; or a series throughout Ordinary Time using most or all of the psalms in the book.
- Explore the themes in *Psalms of Wonder* as your starting point. Create a six-part series using a psalm from each category or focus on one category to create a series using each psalm under that theme.

Preaching the Narrative Lectionary

If you preach using the Narrative Lectionary, take a few moments each year to lift up the Psalm reading, incorporating additional ideas throughout this guide using art, music, and thoughtful times of reading aloud. The lectionary selections include both the primary and accompanying readings.

Lectionary Week	Psalm Referenced in Lectionary Selections	Page # in <i>Psalms of Wonder</i>
NL107	Psalm 51	p. 31
NL116	Psalm 23	p. 28
NL117	Psalm 96	p. 39
NL118	Psalm 95	p. 25
NL120	Psalm 96	p. 39
NL122	Psalm 91	p. 46
NL124	Psalm 20	p. 24
NL126	Psalm 84	p. 58
NL127	Psalm 95	p. 25
NL130	Psalm 51	p. 31
NL140	Psalm 40	p. 33
NL219	Psalm 91	p. 46
NL220	Psalm 103	p. 56
NL221	Psalm 103	p. 56
NL226	Psalm 51	p. 31
NL229	Psalm 27	p. 18
NL231	Psalm 19	p. 10
NL232	Psalm 34	p. 42
NL235	Psalm 102	p. 22
NL236	Psalm 118	p. 38
NL239	Psalm 118	p. 38

Lectionary Week	Psalm Referenced in Lectionary Selections	Page # in <i>Psalms of Wonder</i>
NL317	Psalm 96	p. 39
NL321	Psalm 51	p. 31
NL323	Psalm 90	p. 51
NL329	Psalm 36	p. 54
NL336	Psalm 118	p. 38
NL337	Psalm 34	p. 42
NL340	Psalm 30	p. 32
NL407	Psalm 51	p. 31
NL417	Psalm 96	p. 39
NL420	Psalm 66	p. 12
NL424	Psalm 42	p. 55
NL425	Psalm 40	p. 33
NL426	Psalm 34	p. 42
NL428	Psalm 36	p. 54
NL429	Psalm 27	p. 18
NL430	Psalm 23	p. 28
NL432	Psalm 51	p. 31
NL436	Psalm 24	p. 15

Using *Psalms of Wonder* for Sermon Preparation



Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary

Psalms of Wonder is an ideal companion to your other Bible commentaries that can bring additional insight into the weekly readings from the book of Psalms. The lectionary selections include both semicontinuous and complementary readings.

YEAR A			YEAR B			YEAR C		
Lectionary Week	Psalm from Reading	Page # in <i>Psalms of Wonder</i>	Lectionary Week	Psalm from Reading	Page # in <i>Psalms of Wonder</i>	Lectionary Week	Psalm from Reading	Page # in <i>Psalms of Wonder</i>
Christmas Eve	Psalm 96	p. 39	Christmas Eve	Psalm 96	p. 39	Christmas Eve	Psalm 96	p. 39
2nd Sunday after Epiphany	Psalm 40	p. 33	2nd Sunday after Epiphany	Psalm 139	p. 62	2nd Sunday after Epiphany	Psalm 36	p. 54
Ash Wednesday	Psalm 51	p. 31	6th Sunday after Epiphany	Psalm 30	p. 32	3rd Sunday after Epiphany	Psalm 19	p. 10
2nd Sunday in Lent	Psalm 121	p. 23	8th Sunday after Epiphany	Psalm 103	p. 56	Ash Wednesday	Psalm 51	p. 31
4th Sunday in Lent	Psalm 23	p. 28	9th Sunday after Epiphany	Psalm 96	p. 39	2nd Sunday in Lent	Psalm 27	p. 18
6th Sunday in Lent (Liturgy of the Palms)	Psalm 118	p. 38	Ash Wednesday	Psalm 51	p. 31	6th Sunday in Lent (Liturgy of the Palms)	Psalm 118	p. 38
Monday of Holy Week	Psalm 36	p. 54	3rd Sunday in Lent	Psalm 19	p. 10	Monday of Holy Week	Psalm 36	p. 54
Easter Day	Psalm 118	p. 38	4th Sunday in Lent	Psalm 107	p. 48	2nd Sunday of Easter	Psalm 118	p. 38
4th Sunday of Easter	Psalm 23	p. 28	5th Sunday in Lent	Psalm 51	p. 31	3rd Sunday of Easter	Psalm 30	p. 32
6th Sunday of Easter	Psalm 66	p. 12	6th Sunday in Lent (Liturgy of the Palms)	Psalm 118	p. 38	4th Sunday of Easter	Psalm 23	p. 28
Trinity Sunday	Psalm 8	p. 14	Monday of Holy Week	Psalm 36	p. 54	Trinity Sunday	Psalm 8	p. 14
Proper 4	Psalm 46	p. 21	Easter Day	Psalm 118	p. 38	Proper 4	Psalm 96	p. 39
Proper 5	Psalm 33	p. 36	4th Sunday of Easter	Psalm 23	p. 28	Proper 5	Psalm 30	p. 32
Proper 11	Psalm 139	p. 62	Proper 3	Psalm 103	p. 56	Proper 7	Psalm 42	p. 55
Proper 19	Psalm 103	p. 56	Proper 4	Psalm 139	p. 62	Proper 9	Psalm 30	p. 32
Proper 22	Psalm 19	p. 10	Proper 6	Psalm 20	p. 24	Proper 9	Psalm 66	p. 12
Proper 23	Psalm 23	p. 28	Proper 7	Psalm 107	p. 48	Proper 14	Psalm 33	p. 36
Proper 24	Psalm 96	p. 39	Proper 8	Psalm 30	p. 32	Proper 16	Psalm 103	p. 56
Proper 25	Psalm 90	p. 51	Proper 10	Psalm 24	p. 15	Proper 18	Psalm 139	p. 62
Proper 28	Psalm 90	p. 51	Proper 11	Psalm 23	p. 28	Proper 19	Psalm 51	p. 31
Proper 29	Psalm 95	p. 25	Proper 13	Psalm 51	p. 31	Proper 21	Psalm 91	p. 46
All Saints Day	Psalm 34	p. 42	Proper 14	Psalm 34	p. 42	Proper 23	Psalm 66	p. 12
			Proper 15	Psalm 34	p. 42	Proper 24	Psalm 121	p. 23
			Proper 16	Psalm 34	p. 42	Proper 25	Psalm 84	p. 58
			Proper 16	Psalm 84	p. 58	Proper 29	Psalm 46	p. 21
			Proper 19	Psalm 19	p. 10			
			Proper 22	Psalm 8	p. 14			
			Proper 23	Psalm 90	p. 51			
			Proper 24	Psalm 91	p. 46			
			Proper 25	Psalm 34	p. 42			
			All Saints Day	Psalm 24	p. 15			